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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 006157

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: REVISION OF PARTY CONSTITUTION: "BEGINNING OF HU JINTAO ERA"

REF: A. FBIS/OSC CPP20070917338001

[1](#)B. BEIJING 5974

[1](#)C. BEIJING 5815

[1](#)D. BEIJING 5706

[1](#)E. BEIJING 4420

[1](#)F. BEIJING 3608

[1](#)G. BEIJING 2188

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson.
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) This week's announcement that the Chinese Communist Party Constitution will be revised at the October Party Congress, apparently to incorporate key concepts associated with General Secretary Hu Jintao, signals a clear advance in Hu's consolidation of power and marks the "beginning of the Hu Jintao era," according to initial reaction from two Embassy contacts on September 18. This outcome is both a "natural" nod to Hu as he heads into his second and final term as General Secretary, and also a reflection of Hu's skill in managing his relations with other top leaders, particularly former General Secretary Jiang Zemin, whose "time has passed." As a further demonstration of Hu's strength, Hu protege Li Keqiang is reportedly in charge of the group that has drafted Hu's report for the Congress. That report is likely to focus on "practical issues" such as solving the inequalities caused by more than 30 years of exclusive focus on GDP growth, which is precisely what Hu's "Scientific Development" and "Harmonious Society" are all about, contacts say. End Summary.

Party Announces Constitution to be Revised

[1](#)2. (C) CCTV news and the Xinhua news agency announced the evening of September 17 that the Party Constitution will be "appropriately amended" at the October 15 Party Congress and strongly implied that the "Scientific Development Concept" would be among the revisions (Ref A). The Scientific Development Concept has, of course, long been associated with General Secretary Hu Jintao and, together with "Harmonious Society," forms the core of his policy and ideological platform. The announcement said that Hu had chaired a Politburo meeting that same day, in which a draft of the revised constitution, along with a draft of Hu's Congress report, were discussed and referred to the Seventh Plenum, which will open on October 9 (before being submitted to the October 15 Party Congress). The announcement stated that the revision would include "important theoretical developments" that had taken place since the 16th Party Congress in 2002 -- i.e., since Hu became Party General Secretary -- and, again, strongly implied that the Scientific Development Concept would be among them by saying that the Party should "give expression" to the Scientific Development Concept and write

into the Constitution the important viewpoints, ideas and arrangements put forth in Hu's report to the Congress. News of the announcement was the lead story in all official papers on the morning of September 18, including the Party flagship paper People's Daily.

"Beginning of the Hu Jintao Era"

¶3. (C) Initial reaction to the announcement about revision of the constitution is that it signals a major advance in Hu Jintao's consolidation of power atop China's Communist Party structure. Wang Zhenyao (strictly protect), a Director General at China's Ministry of Civil Affairs, on September 18 told Poloff the announcement demonstrates that Hu is "quite strong" going into the Congress and that he has solidified his position in terms of policy and ideology. Moreover, Wang emphasized, the announcement shows the "vast majority" of Party members are fully behind Hu and his core concepts: Scientific Development, which is the "means" to solve China's current developmental and societal problems; and Harmonious Society, which is the "end objective."

¶4. (C) Zhang Xiantang (strictly protect), a senior journalist at the State Council-affiliated newspaper Economic Times, was more adamant, declaring to Poloff on September 18 that the announcement marks the "beginning of the Hu Jintao era." Hu is "clearly in charge" and "faces no serious opposition" with the Party, particularly on policy, Zhang emphasized. Hu Jintao's thought is set to become China's "controlling ideology." Zhang predicted that in addition to the Scientific Development Concept, Hu's Harmonious Society and "People First" (yi ren wei ben) concepts would also be written into the Constitution. In terms of policy, ideology

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responsible for various sections of the report on topics such as politics, law, economics and education. The report now is almost certainly in "near final" form, Zhang said, as Hu's June 25 speech at the Party School already introduced the report's main themes and would have reflected the consensus views of the Party's senior leadership on the document.

Report to Focus on "Practical" Topics

¶10. (C) Zhang and Wang both agreed that there most likely will be "no surprises" in Hu's political report, which will contain "very little" on political reform and instead focus on "practical issues" such as dealing with the inequalities brought about by 30 years of focus on GDP growth above all else. Dealing with "realistic problems" such as these social gaps is what Hu's slogans of "Scientific Development" and "Harmonious Society," are all about, Wang underscored. Wang, who is a staunch advocate of political reform, conceded that, under current circumstances, China needs to deal with these income, development and regional gaps and continue to "lay the foundation" of a more open political system before China is ready for "real" political reform. Zhang separately agreed, saying that Hu's commitment to lessening the "contradictions" in Chinese society and spreading the benefits of reform and opening beyond a select few to the majority of Chinese citizens will form the core of the report. Significant political reform now is simply not in the cards, Zhang assessed.

Comment

¶11. (C) Hu Jintao's apparent achievement in getting his

thought enshrined in the Party Constitution would appear to demonstrate that he goes into the October 15 Party Congress in a very strong position. Despite Zhang Xiantang's comment that he had "expected" the constitution to be revised along these lines, most of post's other contacts had been predicting that it was "too early" for Hu to achieve this much so early, believing, for example, that he would have to wait until 2012 to revise the Party Constitution (Ref G). Moreover, if Hu's protege Li Keqiang is in fact in charge of the drafting of Hu's Congress report, then it would appear that Hu is positioned to emerge from the Congress in a significantly strengthened position, with his policies and theories set to become the Party's guiding ideology for the coming five years.

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